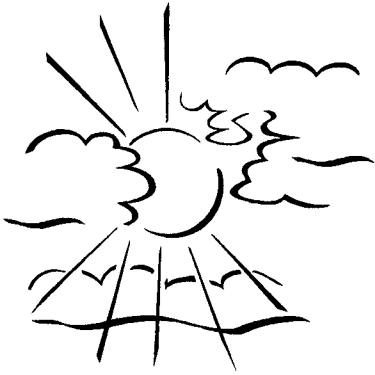


***Department
of
Human
Services***

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, October 21, 2005

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

TOPIC	PAGE
*Domestic Violence	2-9
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	10-14
*Juvenile Justice	15-22
Vulnerable Adults	23-27
Child Support	28-29
Health Care	30-31
Family to Family	32
Energy Assistance	33
Employment/Training	34-36
Living Wage	37-40
Charities	41-43

'Mama's not here, but I'm here for you' -- father, baby reunited after attack

Friday, October 21, 2005

By Ken Kolker**The Grand Rapids Press**

GRAND RAPIDS -- Leoncio Garcia-Lopez reached out with heavily bandaged arms -- still painful from knife wounds suffered in a fight for his life -- and took his 10-month-old son from a social worker.

He had not seen Jonathan Garcia-Sanchez since the boy's mother, his pregnant wife, Silvia Sanchez-Parada, was strangled in their home six days earlier, on Oct. 14. He lost his wife of two years and their unborn daughter, whom he named Luz Maria.

Now, it was just him and Jonathan.

"Mi bebe, mi bebe, mi muchacho," Garcia-Lopez, 43, said on Thursday, cradling his son against his chest and kissing the boy's forehead.

"What happened to you, my beautiful son?" he asked, also in Spanish. "Mama's not here, but I'm here for you."

Thursday's reunion was delayed several days while Garcia-Lopez recovered in the hospital and Grand Rapids police investigated his wife's death. Children's Protective Services cared for the boy until returning the child at the front door of Garcia-Lopez's brother's house. He and the boy are staying with the brother in the Grand Rapids area.

Edwin Lario Munoz, 19, who shared a home at 848 Baxter St. SE with Garcia-Lopez's family, is charged with attacking Garcia-Lopez, and police said he likely will be charged with the slaying of the wife.

Munoz, a native of Honduras, gained national attention in 2002 -- with stories in Parade Magazine and in such newspapers as the Los Angeles Times -- when he testified before Congress on the plight of orphaned immigrant children. He claimed he was abused for months while jailed in California after illegally crossing the United States border from Mexico.

Before the Thursday's reunion with his son, Garcia-Lopez recounted the horror of Oct. 14, when he returned home from his job preparing food and washing dishes at Chili's restaurant on 28th Street SE.

He turned the key in the front door, but it was locked with a dead-bolt, he said. Munoz unlocked the door, let him in, then locked it behind him, he said.

In one hand, Munoz had a knife used by Silvia to cut vegetables, and in the other, he held a meat fork, Garcia-Lopez said. He wore yellow rubber gloves, he said.

Garcia-Lopez and his 27-year-old wife, who married in Mexico, moved into the home about two months ago. A short time later, the landlord rented an upstairs bedroom to Munoz, whom Garcia-Lopez called "the boy."

There was no locked door to separate Garcia-Lopez's family from the upstairs tenant, leading to trouble, Garcia-Lopez said. Munoz argued often with Silvia, angering her by playing loud music

and using her dishes without permission, Garcia-Lopez said. He accused them of breaking his stereo.

At the front door Oct. 14, armed with the knife and meat fork, Munoz told Garcia-Lopez: "Enter with a lot of caution." He said there was a gang upstairs. Garcia-Lopez's son was crying in the bedroom.

"Where's Silvia?" Garcia-Lopez asked of his wife. The gang has her upstairs, tied up, Munoz told him.

Garcia-Lopez picked up his son from the bedroom and walked into the kitchen, where he found his wife, already dead, lying on her back, he said. A wash cloth covered her eyes, and red marks were on her neck, he said. He said he ran into a bedroom and lay his son on a bed.

"I have orders to tie you up," he recounted Munoz saying. "They want your bank card. Lay on the floor, so I can tie you up."

Garcia-Lopez said he slammed the man's arm in the bedroom door, causing him to drop the knife, which broke. A struggle ensued, and they fought over the knife and meat fork. Garcia-Lopez said he stabbed the attacker in the belly.

Besides the knife wounds, Garcia-Lopez suffered puncture wounds to his chest and to his sides from the meat fork, he said.

Then, the fight stopped. "Edwin said, 'I hit you, you hit me. Now we have to call the police,'" Garcia-Lopez said.

Munoz ran out first, bleeding badly, followed by Garcia-Lopez, who was carrying his son. "This man just killed his wife; now he's trying to kill me," Munoz told a neighbor, who called 911.

Garcia-Lopez said he ran to another neighbor's house.

Grand Rapids police said they believe the story told by Garcia-Lopez. They arrested Munoz on a charge of attempted murder for the attack on the husband. They said they expect to seek warrants charging him with the murder of the wife. They were trying to determine whether to also charge him with the death of the unborn child.

The social worker who delivered Jonathan back also to his father told the family that the unborn child, who was due to be born in January, had a slight heartbeat when she was taken from her dead mother at the hospital. Doctors tried to save her.

On Wednesday, the little girl was baptized during the funeral for her and her mother. She was placed in a small box, which will be buried in her mother's casket.

Suspect wants to withdraw his plea

Friday, October 21, 2005

By Steven Hepker

shepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

A Jackson man who admitted stabbing his wife to death wants to take back his confession. Michael J. Sullivan, through attorney Michael Dungan, filed a motion this week to withdraw his second-degree murder plea.

Circuit Judge Chad Schmucker, who had scheduled a Nov. 9 sentencing date, must hold a hearing on the motion. He has not set a date.

"We will argue the judge should not allow him to withdraw," Chief Assistant Prosecutor Mark Blumer said.

If Schmucker approves the withdrawal, prosecutors will reinstate a charge of open murder, Blumer said.

At his pretrial hearing Aug. 22, Sullivan, 55, told Schmucker he killed Susan Marie Sullivan because she threatened to have him sent to prison. They had a history of fighting, police said. Sullivan said they were arguing the night of Nov. 6 at their N. Gorham Street home when he grabbed a kitchen knife after she struck him in the head with a plastic bottle. Police said Susan Marie, 50, bled to death after being stabbed twice in the neck.

Sullivan's previous attorney, Donald Ferris of Ann Arbor, told Schmucker he considered an insanity plea but admitted claiming Sullivan was provoked into stabbing his wife was a long shot.

Dungan could not be reached regarding his strategy for defending Sullivan.

Prosecutors had agreed to support a prison term of 15 to 30 years for the second-degree murder plea, rather than push for a life sentence. That agreement ends if the plea is withdrawn.

First-degree murder carries a mandatory life sentence, while second-degree murder calls for a sentence of up to life in prison.

Resignations shake up agency

Friday, October 21, 2005

JILL ARMENTROUT
THE SAGINAW NEWS

Internal strife at the Underground Railroad -- Saginaw's domestic abuse shelter -- is boiling over with a firing, a board member's "ousting" and three staff resignations amid complaints about the agency's leaders.

Former employees are accusing the agency's directors of mistreating them and ignoring complaints. Board members and administrators say they are taking measures to resolve the situation.

The Underground Railroad annually shelters hundreds of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. In 2004, the shelter served 342 people -- 151 women and 191 children -- and took 1,400 crisis line calls, more than 100 a month.

Wednesday, administrators fired Stacey Sheiko, community relations director. She isn't commenting.

Alicia Harrison, underserved populations advocate, left the office in protest but didn't officially resign Wednesday, she said. Monday, Trischa A. Zumbach, operations director, resigned.

Jennifer L. McMahon quit as advocacy manager in late September.

The trio each had worked at Underground Railroad about a year.

Zumbach said two employees filed complaints, one of them for wrongful termination, with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The Saginaw News could not reach the women for comment, nor would the commission confirm an investigation into the complaints. Former employees said about half of the 37 employees have complained to the Board of Directors or written anonymous letters to board members.

Zumbach talked Wednesday and Thursday of a "major turnover" of workers in the past several years, adding that employees came to her with complaints -- including workers who said administrators reduced their hours or wages -- and that she was unable to help them.

Valerie Hoffman, president and chief executive officer for 11 years, told The News that she couldn't discuss personnel issues in detail but that a small group of workers, at the agency a short time, complained.

Zumbach said the employees came to her and another supervisor.

"We were told by the CEO that we were wasting our time caring what employees think," she said. "Employees feel they can't trust her. They are being lied to and are not valued. We are supposed to be empowering women, but employees aren't supported. The CEO has too much power over the board."

Zumbach has accepted a job in Naples, Fla.

"Clearly there are some questionable behaviors and practices happening internally at the organization," Harrison said. "The worst part is that the clients are the ones who will suffer most, because it takes time to build trust with caseworkers."

McMahon said she worries that speaking out could damage the reputation of the agency and endanger funding -- but also fears that unhappy employees can't do their jobs.

Board Chairwoman Mari McKenzie said board members are aware of staff problems and are working with Hoffman "to resolve them without negatively impacting the services that Underground Railroad provides victims."

The board recently hired a consultant, Dave Bailey, a Delta College instructor, to meet with employees and "come to a consensus of problems," said McKenzie, an audit partner at the Saginaw accounting firm of Yeo & Yeo.

She said she expects a report from the consultant next week and will consider policy changes or training based on his recommendations.

"The people who stirred things up left before the process was resolved," the chairwoman said. Employees haven't come to her, Hoffman said, complaining instead to board members -- a violation of agency policy.

Liza von Claparede of Saginaw, a board member for a year, said she was "ousted" in September because she disagreed with some members over the handling of complaints.

"Underground Railroad is a fine organization doing good work," she said. "However, it is not a kingdom. It answers to a larger public trust. The role of the board should be to ensure that every faction has a voice."

"I'm not sure things are being realigned into a healthy work environment and healthy agency. It pains me to see this agency in any turmoil," said Drewe Robinson of Saginaw Township, who left the board last month when her three-year term expired.

McKenzie said von Claparede's departure was a "difficult decision" by the board.

Two other board members, Carol Chisholm and Pam Blondin, resigned recently because of time constraints, not concerns or conflict.

Four new members will join the 15-seat board this fall. At least one seat remains open.

Son found guilty of burning parents

Web-posted Oct 21, 2005

By STEPHEN FRYE
Of The Oakland Press

A jury needed only a little more than two hours to convict a man of first-degree murder in the burning deaths of his elderly parents.

Craig Cymes will receive a mandatory life sentence Nov. 10 for the murders of Marion Cymes, 80, and Mayetta Cymes, 76, both of whom perished during a house fire at their Farmington Hills home Jan. 21.

Cymes, 47, who lived with and cared for his ailing parents, admitted to the jury he started the fire, but he told them it was accidental < after he had poured gasoline on the floor in reaction to his mother's frantic calls for suicide, believing her husband had died.

Medical examiner testimony showed that both died of smoke inhalation.

"They were alive when that fire started," Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Denise Brainard told the jury. "He intentionally got the gasoline from the garage. He intentionally poured the gasoline around their living area, where his parents slept when his father was confined to a hospital bed. He lit the gasoline."

She scoffed at his notion that he poured only six to eight ounces of fluid and said he told his parents, "We can all die real quick."

Cymes said he intended to clean up the gasoline, but he clicked his lighter and the spark ignited the fumes. He said he then could not put it out, despite stamping it with his feet, blankets and a chair.

"Craig Cymes caused the deaths of his parents, but he is not a murderer," defense attorney Larry Kaluzny told the jury. "This is not a killing done with deliberation ... It's a frantic, chaotic, stressful situation. Everything was happening at once."

Kaluzny argued that Cymes was under duress, upset about his parents' failing health and frustrated by having to take care of them and feeling hopelessness.

"He was out of control," Kaluzny said. "The fire was out of control before he knew it. It was stupid, what he did."

But Cymes showed no emotion after the jury rejected that claim, favoring Brainard's argument that the death was motivated by "selfishness, greed and revenge" on the part of a son wanting a life free of the responsibility and the money from their insurance, who felt anger at them for ruining his life.

Many of his feelings about the situation were pulled from a saved instant messaging chat with his 25-year-old son, in which Cymes repeatedly bemoaned his situation, made fun of his father's diminished abilities and also asked if it would be all right if the house blew up and he alone survived. His son, Jason Cymes, told him, no, it would not be OK.

"A motive isn't necessary," Brainard said to the jury of what she needed to prove. "(But) in this case, we've got three."

Farmington Hills Police Chief William Dwyer credited Sgt. James Knittel Jr., detectives Greg Hughes and Al Patterson, Farmington Hills fire fighters and arson investigators, and Brainard with thorough work that resulted in the conviction.

Jury convicts Detroit-area man in burning deaths of his parents

10/21/2005, 10:59 a.m. ET

The Associated Press

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — It took only about two hours for a jury to convict a suburban Detroit man of setting his parents on fire and leaving them to die.

Craig Joseph Cymes was found guilty of two first-degree murder counts Thursday and will receive a mandatory life prison term when sentenced Nov. 10 in Oakland County Circuit Court. He was arrested in January and accused of setting fire to a Farmington Hills home where he lived with his parents Marion Cymes, 80, and Mayetta Cymes, 76. An autopsy determined both died of soot and smoke inhalation.

Cymes, 47, told jurors that he started the fire by accident after pouring a small amount of gasoline on the floor in reaction to his mother's calls for suicide. His mother, he said, believed that her husband had died.

But Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Denise Brainard said he intended to kill them.

"He intentionally poured the gasoline around their living area, where his parents slept, when his father was confined to a hospital bed. He lit the gasoline," she told jurors.

Police said Cymes was standing outside the house in a T-shirt, shorts and socks when firefighters arrived. Cymes lived at his parents' home for about three years and was their primary caregiver.

Brainard told jurors that Cymes set the fire because he wanted the money from his parents' life insurance as well as a life free from the responsibility of caring for them.

Information from: The Oakland Press, <http://www.theoaklandpress.com>

Detroit News

Friday, October 21, 2005

Oakland Briefs

Detroit News staff reports and wire services

Farmington Hills

Son is guilty in parents' fire deaths

An Oakland Circuit Court jury found a Farmington Hills man, 47, guilty Thursday of first-degree, premeditated murder in the Jan. 21 deaths of his parents. Jurors found Craig Cymes guilty of setting the fatal house fire in which Marion Cymes, 80, and Mayetta Cymes, 76, died. Craig Cymes had testified that he set the fire inside his parents' Pipers Lane home by accident, but then was unable to either put out the blaze or rescue his parents because of the intense smoke and heat. Assistant prosecuting attorney Denise Brainard said Cymes was frustrated at his parents' declining health and tired of caring for their needs.

October 21, 2005

Cheboygan man guilty of sex abuse

FROM RECORD EAGLE STAFF REPORTS

CHEBOYGAN - A Cheboygan man was found guilty of the sexual abuse of a girl, beginning when she was 7 years old.

James Edward Kitchen, 39, was found guilty this week on four counts of criminal sexual conduct after a two-day trial that included testimony from the victim, who's now 12.

The girl testified about sexual abuse that continued for three years until she told her mother.

Three of the charges came from abuse incidents on Hebron Mail Route Road in Cheboygan County and the fourth at the Mackinaw Apartments in Cheboygan.

The jury was out for 90 minutes before returning the guilty verdicts.

Mother Who Injected Teen With Heroin To Stay In Prison

Macomb County Judge Imposes Same 15- To 40-Year Term

POSTED: 2:51 pm EDT October 20, 2005

MOUNT CLEMENS, Mich. -- A suburban Detroit woman imprisoned for injecting her daughter with heroin has been resentenced to at least 15 years in prison.

Lisa Havens cried and apologized, but her plea Thursday didn't help shorten her jail time.

A Macomb County judge imposed the same 15- to 40-year term that she handed down in December 2002. The 49-year-old Havens was convicted of delivering drugs to a minor.

She admitted showing her 15-year-old daughter and a 14-year-old friend how to use heroin by injecting them both with the drug.

The state appeals court ordered a new hearing for Havens because the judge didn't fully explain why she exceeded sentencing guidelines.

Woman Charged in Deaths of Her 3 Children

By CAROLYN MARSHALL
The New York Times

Published: October 21, 2005

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 20 - A woman whose family said she heard voices that told her to dump her three young children into the frigid waters of San Francisco Bay was charged Thursday with three counts of murder.

The mother, Lashaun T. Harris, 23, of Oakland, has been in custody since Wednesday in the killings of the children, identified by the police as Treyshun Harris, 6; Taronta Greeley, 2; and Joshua Greeley, 16 months.

Rescuers recovered Taronta's body at 10 p.m. on Wednesday near the St. Francis Yacht Club, near the Golden Gate Bridge but about two miles from Pier 7 and the Ferry Building, where the police believe that Ms. Harris dumped the children.

The police said the search began at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday after an unidentified man called 911 to report he had seen the woman throw at least one child into the water.

The San Francisco police chief, Heather Fong, said on Thursday that a multiagency air, land and water search was under way, with 80 rescuers from the San Francisco Police and Fire Departments, the California Highway Patrol and the Coast Guard scouring the waterfront area. "We have officers walking all of the piers and the marina slips to locate the other two victims," Ms. Fong said.

But with the San Francisco Bay's notoriously strong tides and 55-degree waters, finding the children alive and rescuing them was unlikely, she said, adding, "We have turned this into a recovery effort."

The authorities also fear that the children will be hard to find. Scuba divers from the Fire Department here have been hunting for the children beneath the piers and along the bay bottom. "The waters are very murky and we literally have zero visibility," said one diver after a 30-minute dive. "We weren't lucky."

Ms. Harris apparently came from a large family, and about 40 of her relatives and friends gathered at Pier 7 on Thursday hoping to get information about the children. Friends and relatives said they had been worried recently about Ms. Harris's mental stability.

"She had been crying out for help," said Avery Garrett, 41, an Oakland resident who identified himself as Ms. Harris's uncle.

Ms. Harris had been living at a Salvation Army shelter in Oakland, Mr. Garrett said. He said he believed that she had been taking medication for emotional problems.

But Ms. Harris desperately wanted to get help, Mr. Garrett said, and recently tried to be admitted to a mental health facility. She was not admitted, he said, perhaps because she did not have health insurance.

Mr. Garrett said the family had grown increasingly concerned recently after Ms. Harris told a relative about the voices.

"She said she heard some voices in her head," Mr. Garrett said, "and they told her to take the kids and feed them to the sharks."

Information Pertinent to Legislative and State Department Activities
Since 1906

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

For the week beginning October 24, 2005

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25

House Energy and Technology, (Chr. Nofs, 373-8538),
Rm. 519 HOB, 9 a.m.

SB 708 **CHILDREN'S REGISTRY** (Stamas) Provides technical
amendments to children's protection registry act.

SB 785 **CHILD PROTECTION** (Bishop) Provides safeguards to
prevent certain messages regarding tobacco, alcohol, pornography and
gambling from reaching children via the Internet.

Shooting spurs outrage, panic

Friday, October 21, 2005

JOE SNAPPER
THE SAGINAW NEWS

A bloody young man writhing on the floor of a school hallway ringing with the echo of gunfire was just the sort of shocking incident many people expected.

Thursday's Saginaw High School shooting certainly was no surprise to Saginaw County's prosecutor and Saginaw's police chief.

They were quick to note that deadly weapons wielded by students bent on harming classmates from the wrong family, the wrong side of town or who simply did them wrong long have plagued the school.

"It isn't, frankly, something you couldn't anticipate," Prosecutor Michael D. Thomas said.

"Why is this shocking incident not so shocking?" Chief Gerald H. Cliff asked.

The critical wounds of

15-year-old Daniel Foster merely marked the most serious turn of violence in a public high school derelict in its duty to keep buildings safe, say some parents, students and law enforcers.

"That ain't right!" Yolanda Chism shouted at police and Saginaw High officials as she walked the campus searching for her son, shot during the lunch hour.

When Chism found medics loading Foster -- a hole in his chest and strapped to a stretcher -- into the back of an ambulance, she wailed.

Minutes earlier on the southeast wing's second floor, the shooter got so close that his small-caliber handgun bullet passed completely through Foster's chest. Police found the slug later, investigators said.

The gunfire, which police, students and parents said appeared gang-related, made "a mockery of school security," Thomas said.

Thomas chafed at what he called school leaders' refusals to install metal detectors and other security precautions despite repeated suggestions from him and police leaders.

"This is the final straw for public safety in our school," said Thomas, who will consider charging the 15-year-old shooting suspect as an adult. A Family Court hearing is set for 3 p.m. today.

School leaders Thursday agreed to force all students through a metal detector today, leading many students and parents to predict that attendance will prove unusually light.

"I'm absolutely angered, angered," said Dawkins, flanked by administrators, district staff, police and Board of Education members during a Thursday news conference.

"I've had enough, Saginaw," he said. "Every parent needs to check their child's rooms, check their book bags, even check their automobiles."

A perilous intersection

Saginaw High's students hail from a city carved by gang territories, which in recent years have produced rivalries defined largely by deadly intentions.

School officials have acknowledged they know gangs are in their buildings. But during the news conference, Security Chief Arthur O'Neal denied that gang ties played a role in the shooting.

Violence is no stranger to Saginaw High. The last on-campus shooting came three weeks ago, a drive-by that injured two after a dance. A month earlier, a student with a loaded gun walked into school. Last spring, a girl had her throat slashed in a hallway.

"This is some bull ...this crazy," said the girl, Destiny Oglesvy, 16, on Thursday, a rough four-inch scar stretching below her neck. "It's kind of surprising because it happened inside the school building.

"That they got in there (with a gun) is not surprising. Similar stuff has happened before."

Yet school leaders -- until Thursday -- refused to heighten security by installing metal detectors, despite repeated suggestions from Thomas and Cliff.

School leaders brushed aside the chidings of parents, students and law enforcement officials, who in various ways Thursday said: "I told you so."

"I'm not going to respond to that," district spokesman Mike Manley said, responding specifically to Thomas' comments. "We don't want to get into a he-said, she-said."

The shooting

Witnesses said Foster was standing in a second-floor hallway when another teen pulled a handgun from his coat and shot.

A 16-year-old girl, too fearful of retaliation to give her name, said Foster yelled, "All, I got shot!"

He then ran a few paces, fell sideways to the floor and began kicking his legs, she said.

Another witness, a 17-year-old junior who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, told The Saginaw News that gang members from the city's North Side bet the assailant he wouldn't shoot.

She said she was standing 15 feet away from the group of "10 boys" as one of them was bragging about having a gun, she said.

The others dared him to shoot Foster, who several witnesses said lives on the city's South Side.

"They said they'd give him \$20 or \$40 or something," said the 17-year-old girl. "I didn't really believe them."

The teen pulled a handgun -- police said it was a .380-caliber -- out of the black Carhartt-style coat he was wearing, she said.

"The dude just whipped out his gun and started shooting," said Clarence Hatchett, a 16-year-old junior.

Police said Foster underwent surgery at Covenant Medical Center, emerging about 2 p.m. in critical condition but expected to survive.

Outrage and panic

Confusion, driven by a sense of chaos, spread among students and parents, some milling, other running across campus grounds.

Inside the three-story school, students hollered "Shut down the High" from top-floor windows.

At least three students climbed out of ground-level windows, one with the help of friends already outside. Educators periodically closed classroom windows only to have their students throw them back open.

The incident sent the school into lockdown for at least three hours, drawing scores of angry parents to the doors demanding their children's release after their sons and daughters called them from cell phones.

Parents, riven by emotion, trampled a line of yellow police tape intended to create a 20-foot buffer around a front entrance. They pressed into school officials and police barring the school's front door.

"All I want is my son," one woman yelled.

"I wanna know how people get into the (expletive) school with a (expletive) gun?" another hollered.

This morning, security staff at Saginaw High seized cell phones as students trickled into the building.

"Empty out your pockets, take out everything metal," Principal Clifford Davis instructed students as they approached the school from cars and buses.

When confronted about their cell phones, several students left the school grounds.

Davis advised that staff would return phones at the end of the school day.

On Thursday, police let groups of five to 10 parents at a time into the school to sign out their children. Investigators worked to get names of witnesses before letting them go.

Some escaped first. A 17-year-old girl afraid of gang retaliation said the shooting sparked panic on the crowded second-floor hallway.

It was a stroke of luck no one else was shot, said the girl, who ran into the gym and out a rear door, slipping through the lockdown that followed.

"Kids was screaming," she said. "Everyone was racing to get out to the parking lot. Some students was running to corners. Some just ran in the bathroom and closed the door."

A link to violence?

Whether the victim and gunman knew one another remains unclear, but several witnesses said they hailed from rival gangs. A woman identifying herself as the suspect's mother called 911 around 8 p.m. to report that Sunny Side gang members -- the South Side contingent -- phoned her threatening to shoot at her house, Central Dispatch officials said.

Both students have juvenile convictions and had re-enrolled at the High School just this month after stints together in the Saginaw County Juvenile Detention Center, O'Neal and city detectives said.

The suspect is on probation for a concealed weapon conviction, investigators said.

While several witnesses described both the victim and suspect as having gang ties -- including Foster as "gang-banger" -- Foster's mother this morning offered a vigorous denial.

"My son is not in a gang," Chism said this morning. "I don't know about him being in any trouble at detention center."

Chism, who was on her way to the hospital to visit her son, declined comment on his condition. She criticized what she called speculation by police, who said Foster is in critical but stable condition and expected to live.

"Cops don't know what they're talking about because they haven't been up to see my son," she said.

Security breached

Police said that after the suspect fired on Foster, he fled out the school's rear door.

But an alert security guard, who had heard a shots fired call seconds earlier, chased down and disarmed the suspicious teen on Carter Street, a half-block from campus.

Although school guards monitor doors at morning arrival times and maintain a closed campus during the day, multiple doors remain open during the lunch hour, parents said.

"At least four doors are open. They can come in any time," said Yolanda Harris, waiting nervously outside for her daughter and son to come out.

"How you think the kids still be able to be toting guns?" she asked.

Other parents belted out cries for change, both from the school and guardians of its students.

"They need prayer back in schools," said Sharon Granderson, 44, whose three nephews attend Saginaw High. "Then it's going to have to turn around."

James Buford, a pastor, said his twin 15-year-olds, a son and daughter -- she called him from her cell phone in tears -- long have deserved better protection.

"Metal detectors are long overdue: They should have been in here after the first incident," he added, referring to the drive-by shooting after a homecoming dance.

Parent Leon Pickett, 51, acknowledged that the need for metal detectors was established long ago but blamed parents for their children's spiraling behavior.

"Saginaw High ain't doing anything wrong," he said.

James Granderson, 42, agreed, emphasizing the need for discipline.

"It's time to bring the belt back," he said.

Do metal detectors work?

In fall 1993, then-Superintendent Foster Gibbs said school administrators studied metal detectors and decided against employing the devices.

With multiple entrances and ground level windows, said Gibbs, a youngster intent on getting a weapon into a school will succeed even with detectors in place.

Less than eight months later, school staff began using handheld detectors for searches at Saginaw and Arthur Hill high schools.

Cliff said that during his three decades at the Detroit Police Department, random metal detector searches proved effective at "problem" inner-city schools.

Still, such efforts require massive police personnel the slimmed city force can hardly provide now, he said.

A history of violence

Thursday's in-school shooting ended a 22-year run of relative firearm peace.

The most recent incident took place in October 1983, when several men attacked a 20-year-old.

He took a bullet in his left hip while he waited in a hallway for his younger brother.

Gunplay was more common a decade earlier.

In September 1973, a Saginaw High school junior shot two 17-year-old classmates in a hallway.

A judge sentenced the gunman to 112 to four years in prison.

In February of that same year, two Saginaw High students faced charges after someone fired three shots at a student in a school hallway.

In December 1972, an assailant shot three times at a 38-year-old Saginaw High teacher inside the school and missed. A 17-year-old student later faced charges of felonious assault.

Joe Snapper and Corey Mitchell are staff writers for The Saginaw News. You may reach Snapper at 776-9715, Mitchell at 776-9677.

Shooting in halls of Saginaw High sparks panic, then howls of outrage

Friday, October 21, 2005

By JOE SNAPPER and COREY MITCHELL
BAY CITY TIMES NEWS SERVICE

SAGINAW - A bloody young man writhing on the floor of a school hallway ringing with the echo of gunfire was just the sort of shocking incident many people expected.

Thursday's Saginaw High School shooting certainly was no surprise to Saginaw County's prosecutor and Saginaw's police chief.

They were quick to note that deadly weapons wielded by students bent on harming classmates from the wrong family, the wrong side of town or who simply did them wrong long have plagued the school.

"It isn't, frankly, something you couldn't anticipate," Prosecutor Michael D. Thomas said.

"Why is this shocking incident not so shocking?" Chief Gerald H. Cliff asked.

The critical wounds of 15-year-old Daniel Foster merely marked the most serious turn of violence in a public high school derelict in its duty to keep buildings safe, say some parents, students and law enforcers.

"That ain't right!" Yolanda Chism shouted at police and Saginaw High School officials as she walked the campus searching for her son, shot during the lunch hour.

When Chism found medics loading Foster - a hole in his chest and strapped to a stretcher - into the back of an ambulance, she wailed.

Minutes earlier on the southeast wing's second floor, the shooter got so close that his small-caliber handgun bullet passed completely through Foster's chest. Police found the slug later, investigators said.

Thomas chafed at what he called school leaders' refusals to install metal detectors and other security precautions despite repeated suggestions from him and police leaders.

"This is the final straw for public safety in our school," said Thomas, who plans to charge the 15-year-old shooting suspect as an adult.

School leaders Thursday agreed to force all students through a metal detector today, leading many students and parents to predict that attendance will prove unusually light.

"I'm absolutely angered, angered," said school Superintendent Gerald D. Dawkins, flanked by administrators, district staff, police and Board of Education members during a Thursday news conference.

"I've had enough, Saginaw," he said. "Every parent needs to check their child's rooms, check their book bags, even check their automobiles."

A perilous intersection

School officials have acknowledged they know gangs are in their buildings.

But during the news conference, Security Chief Arthur O'Neal denied that gang ties played a role in the shooting.

Violence is no stranger to Saginaw High School. The last on-campus shooting came three weeks ago, a drive-by that injured two after a dance. A month earlier, a student with a loaded gun walked into school. Last spring, a girl had her throat slashed in a hallway.

On Thursday, witnesses said Foster was standing in a second-floor hallway when another teen pulled a handgun from his coat and shot.

Foster yelled, ran a few paces, fell sideways to the floor and began kicking his legs, witnesses said.

Another witness, a 17-year-old junior who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, said that gang members from the city's North Side bet the assailant he wouldn't shoot.

She said she was standing 15 feet away from the group of "10 boys" as one of them was bragging about having a gun, she said.

The others dared him to shoot Foster, who several witnesses said lives on the city's South Side. "The dude just whipped out his gun and started shooting," said Clarence Hatchett, a 16-year-old junior.

Police said Foster underwent surgery at Covenant Medical Center, emerging in critical condition but expected to survive.

Hospital officials, however, late Thursday declined to comment on Foster's condition.

Outrage and panic

The incident sent the school into lockdown for at least three hours, drawing scores of angry parents to the doors demanding their children's release after their sons and daughters called them from cell phones.

Parents, driven by emotion, trampled a line of yellow police tape intended to create a "buffer" around a front entrance. They pressed into school officials and police barring the school's front door.

Police let groups of five to 10 parents at a time into the school to sign out their children.

Investigators worked to get names of witnesses before letting them go.

Whether the victim and gunman knew one another remains unclear, but several witnesses said they hailed from rival gangs.

Both students have juvenile convictions and had re-enrolled at the High School just this month after stints together in the Saginaw County Juvenile Detention Center, O'Neal and city detectives said.

The suspect is on probation for a concealed weapon conviction, Thomas said.

Although school guards monitor doors at morning arrival times and maintain a closed campus during the day, multiple doors remain open during the lunch hour, parents said.

James Buford, a pastor, said his twin 15-year-olds, a son and daughter, long have deserved better protection.

"Metal detectors are long overdue: They should have been in here after the first incident," he added, referring to the drive-by shooting after a homecoming dance.

Published October 21, 2005
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Student shot in chest at Saginaw school Injured teenager in critical condition; 15-year-old arrested

By David Eggert
Associated Press

SAGINAW - A 15-year-old student at Saginaw High School was shot in the chest Thursday by another student, police said. Both boys recently transferred to the school from the same juvenile detention center.

The shooting occurred inside the school building about noon, said Mike Manley, a Saginaw Public Schools spokesman. A security guard chased the 15-year-old suspect, who ran from the school and was arrested nearby, Manley said.

"This is not a student we want back in this district," school district security chief Arthur O'Neal said.

The victim was taken to a hospital, where he was in critical condition but expected to live, Manley said.

Both the victim and the suspect are sophomores at the school, he said. Both enrolled earlier this month after stays at the Saginaw County Juvenile Center.

The weapon used in the shooting was recovered, Saginaw police Sgt. Chet Allen said. Officials did not immediately disclose the type of gun involved.

Officials placed the 1,150-student school in lockdown after the shooting while small groups of parents were allowed to enter and pick up their children. Students who were not picked up were released about 2:15 p.m., about 25 minutes earlier than normal, Manley said.

In the 33 years he has worked for the school district, Manley said there had not been a shooting at Saginaw High School.

The school did not have metal detectors, but by Thursday evening, one had been set up at the school's front entrance.

All students will have to pass through the detector today, said officials, who urged that they arrive a half hour early.

Student Shot At Saginaw High School

One Person Taken Into Custody By Police

POSTED: 2:08 pm EDT October 20, 2005

SAGINAW, Mich. -- A Saginaw High School student was shot at about noon on Thursday. The student was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment, Local 4 reported. The condition of the 10th-grader was unknown.

Saginaw police have one person in custody and a weapon. School officials are working to determine the relationship between the student and the alleged gunman.

Parents were picking up students after the school was temporarily placed on lockdown.

Police and witnesses at the school described the immediate scene after the shooting as chaotic, according to the station's reports.

The shooting follows tightened security enacted earlier this fall after a student was shot at a dance.

.

Nursing home workers charged

10/20/2005

Medilodge officials, staffer accused in death of woman, 91

rayk@monroenews.com

By RAY KISONAS

Three Monroe County residents have been charged with crimes after a 91-year-old patient died last year.

A former worker, the former administrator and the director of nursing at Medilodge of Monroe, 481 Village Green Dr., have been included in the investigation conducted by the Michigan Attorney General's office.

A felony charge of vulnerable adult abuse-second degree has been filed against Esau Jake Allen, 49, of Monroe, a former certified nursing assistant at the home.

According to the attorney general's report, Mr. Allen is accused of failing to secure the female resident safely in her wheelchair, which was required in writing by the facility physician.

As a result, the complaint states, the resident fell from her wheelchair and suffered a fractured spine and blunt trauma to her head. The fall happened Sept. 14, 2004. The woman died in Mercy Memorial Hospital four days later. Her name was not released.

Javascript disabled. Cannot display HTML ad.

On Tuesday Mr. Allen was arraigned before First District Judge Jack Vitale, who released him on a \$5,000 personal recognizance bond. Mr. Allen is due back in court for a preliminary examination at 1 p.m. Nov. 1 before Judge Vitale.

If convicted of second-degree vulnerable adult abuse, Mr. Allen faces a maximum penalty of four years in prison and/or a \$5,000 fine.

Also charged were Medilodge's former administrator, Mark Major, and its director of nursing, Connie M. Jennings. Each was charged with a misdemeanor count of failure to report abuse, which carries a maximum penalty of 90 days in jail and/or a \$100 fine.

Judge Vitale arraigned the two and released them on \$1,000 personal bonds. They are due back in court for trial Jan. 3. The attorney general accused them of not reporting the incident to the Michigan Department of Community Health, which is required by law.

Mr. Major, 43, was the administrator for 18 years at Medilodge. He has since left and accepted another position in another community. Reached by phone this morning, Mr. Major said he could not comment on the case under the advice of his attorney.

Richard Krause, a lawyer from East Lansing, is representing Mr. Major and Ms. Jennings, 40, of Erie, who remains employed at Medilodge. Mr. Krause did not return phone calls this morning. Mr. Allen, who also could not be reached this morning, was to have an attorney appointed to him, according to court records.

The Department of Attorney General filed charges in the case.

“This tragic incident should never have happened,” Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox said in a statement. “Through vigilant oversight, aggressive prosecution and proposing changes in laws governing nursing home employees, my office is doing everything possible to prevent future harm to our most vulnerable adults.”

The Medilodge Group, founded in 1979, owns and operates 15 nursing homes and three assisted living centers across Michigan. The Monroe facility has 103 beds.

Senior centers jam-packed

More funds needed to serve fast-growing segment of society

Friday, October 21, 2005

BY LISA CAROLIN

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

Livingston County's senior centers are overflowing with seniors who want to participate in programs but they're short on cash to satisfy the needs of that growing population.

The fastest growing segment of the population in Livingston County is senior citizens, according to the 2000 Census. There were slightly more than 13,000 people age 65 or older in the county in 2000, and that number is forecast to more than triple in 25 years to nearly 43,000.

Local senior citizen centers are already bursting at the seams.

Bobbie Tramel has been a member of the Brighton Senior Center for three years.

"It has been a blessing to me," Tramel says. "I enjoy the crafts and the socialization. It's my life outside my home. But there's just not enough room for the number of people that go there and all the activities that go on. We haven't been able to do certain crafts because of space issues."

"I like visiting the senior center instead of sitting home by myself, but it's rough getting around with all the people and the wheelchairs," says Chuck Friesner, who's also a member of the Brighton Senior Center. "I use a wheelchair myself and try to get there early for events to find a place to sit. When people come in and play music, there's hardly any room to set up."

Brighton Senior Center director Nancy Hall says there's just not enough room, especially during the center's monthly birthday parties. "I have to watch where people put purses and walkers because we're too crowded and the danger of falling is a constant," Hall says.

She says more seniors are moving into the Brighton area than are moving out.

"People are living longer, and more people are retiring early and coming to the center, and we're not meeting the needs of younger seniors," she says.

Hall has been the director for seven years. She says that the center serves people from ages 55 to 91 and has a total membership of close to 400. The annual membership fee is \$28; it's \$38 for those who live outside the school district. The Brighton Senior Center is located at the Miller Early Childhood Center, which also houses all of the Brighton School District's kindergarten classes as well as the Tot Spot child care program. The center pays 15 percent of its budget, about \$15,000, to Brighton Community Education to use the space. Community Education director Anne Rennie says funding is the biggest challenge faced by all the county's senior centers.

"The directors spend a considerable amount of their time trying to get grants and raise funds," Rennie says. "We are seeking financial support from the townships because they need to be supporting these programs. It's so important to the wellness of a senior."

Hall says the Brighton community is very supportive with donations and sponsorships, but it's not enough. Most of the centers also get some United Way funding. She and other senior center directors are in the early stages of working on a proposal for a possible senior millage, an idea that came from Fowlerville Senior Center director Helen V. Kropik.

"The senior centers need the funding," Kropik says. "We're having crowding problems at our center, which we share with Head Start and a church. We're full and busy all the time."

Kropik says her center serves about 200 people. She is part of a consortium on aging in the county that's trying to address the lack of funding.

"There's an increase in depression and malnutrition in seniors," Kropik says. "The senior centers want to be able to address healthy lifestyles and offer exercise, nutrition, socialization, as well as grief support and legal aid."

Kropik and the other senior center directors are working on a fundraiser to benefit all six senior centers. It's tentatively set for Nov. 9 at the Town Commons Center in Howell and will include a wine tasting event and an art auction.

Mark Swanson, director of the Howell Senior Center, is optimistic that the benefit will come together. He, too, says that his center doesn't have enough space.

"We're packed here," says Swanson, whose senior center is run out of the Bennett Recreation Center. "All of our programs run from 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. on weekdays, and we probably have 600 people come to the center every month. We're the only option for many of these people to get out of their homes. My goal is to provide low- to no-cost activities in a fun, safe and friendly environment. We make due with what we have but would like to have some designated space." Space also is the issue for seniors in Pinckney.

"We are in major space constraints," says Cindy Kaye, director of the Pinckney Senior Center, whose facility is located in the Village Community Education Building and is paid for by the school district. "We are doing everything we can to build a new senior center but funding is a huge problem. I just did a proposal for a new senior center that would be part of a new township office just outside the Village of Pinckney on M-36."

Kaye says she expects the senior population of Putnam Township to grow by at least 100 percent over the next 10 years.

In Hamburg Township, it's a different story. The senior center has its own building, so space is not a problem, and director Jamie James says the township funds the center, which serves nearly 500 people.

Space is no longer a problem for the Hartland Senior Center, which moved into the Hartland Educational Support Services Building last year and tripled its size for the 600-plus members. Funding, however, is a problem, according to Hartland Senior Center director Alice Andrews. "We could certainly use additional funds to expand the programs we offer like outreach and caregiver programs and transportation," Andrews says. "Our funding comes from a variety of sources, including the school district, Hartland and Tyrone townships, the United Way, donations, and class fees. There are so many funding sources that I have to spend a lot of my time just keeping track of them."

Hall says she spends so much time fundraising and trying to keep the Brighton Senior Center afloat that she doesn't have time to spend with the seniors.

"I have such a passion for the seniors and the job, and I feel that I'm good at what I do, but I'm so frustrated competing with everyone in the community for money," Hall says. "It just shouldn't be. We wouldn't leave our children at home unattended. Why should our seniors be at home and remain stagnant when they can grow."

"They want to be valued. Seniors are just older versions of us, and we're going to want to be active and have good programs. If we don't have family, we're going to want a sense of family, and we have a lot of seniors who don't have family. The senior centers are their extended family."

Lisa Carolin can be reached at lcarolin@livingstoncommunitynews.com or at (810) 844-2010.

Coldwater Daily Reporter

October 21, 2005

Presentation to apprise seniors of latest scams, how to avoid them

By Don Reid/Staff Writer

COLDWATER — “Scammers” take billions of dollars from elderly Americans each year, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and it happens here in Branch County.

There are ways to protect yourself, and a local organization will begin a series of town meetings next Monday to educate seniors on what to look for.

Diana Bovee, program director at the H and C Burnside Senior Center said Triad started last year as a partnership of law enforcement, seniors and community groups “whose sole purpose is to promote senior safety and to reduce unwarranted fear of crime that seniors often experience.”

Governor Granholm Calls for Extradition of Virginia Man for Unpaid Child Support

LANSING - Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced that she has initiated proceedings to extradite a Virginia man charged with failing to pay more than \$29,000 in child support, a felony crime punishable by four years in prison.

Kenneth Alan Bates was arrested by law enforcement officers in Virginia Beach, Virginia in August, 2005. In September 1983, Bates was ordered by the Gratiot County Circuit Court to pay \$25 per week for the support of his minor child, but he has failed to comply. As of September 2005, his unpaid support obligations totaled \$29,699.04.

"Mr. Bates has failed to meet his responsibility to support his child, and that has consequences," Granholm said. "The state of Michigan will use all tools at its disposal to ensure that parents provide for their children"

Upon return to Michigan, Mr. Bates will face prosecution. In Michigan, non-support of a child is a felony punishable by up to four years in prison and/or a \$2,000 fine. Since taking office, Governor Granholm has requested the return, through the extradition process, of more than 100 parents who have failed to support their children as ordered by courts in Michigan.

Under the Uniform Criminal Extradition Act, the power to demand extradition of a fugitive who has fled from justice in Michigan and taken refuge in another state is vested in the governor. After receiving extradition documents, Virginia officials can issue a warrant delivering the fugitive into the custody of Michigan authorities.

MIRS
October 20, 2005

Granholm Extraditing Deadbeat Dad

Today, Gov. Jennifer **GRANHOLM** announced that she has initiated proceedings to extradite a Virginia man charged with failing to pay more than \$29,000 in child support, a four-year felony.

Police arrested Kenneth Alan **BATES** in Virginia Beach, Va., in August. In 1983, the Gratiot County Circuit Court ordered Bates to pay \$25 per week for the support of his minor child, but he has not. As of September 2005, his unpaid support obligations totaled \$29,700.

"Mr. Bates has failed to meet his responsibility to support his child, and that has consequences," Granholm said. "The state of Michigan will use all tools at its disposal to ensure that parents provide for their children."

Upon return to Michigan, Bates will face prosecution. In Michigan, non-support of a child is a felony punishable by up to four years in prison and/or a \$2,000 fine. Since taking office, Granholm has requested the return, through the extradition process, of more than 100 parents who have failed to support their children as ordered by courts in Michigan.

MIRS

October 20, 2005

Panel Wants Health Savings Accounts Reviewed

A House committee today moved out a bill on party lines that would allow the state employer to negotiate health savings account (HSA) plans with its employees. It's legislation the Department of Civil Service (DCS) says is "unnecessary," "untimely" and "ill-advised."

HB 4705, sponsored by Rep. Jim **MARLEAU** (R-Lake Orion), doesn't mandate that the DCS and the Office of State Employer pursue HSAs, but it makes the statement that legislative Republicans, at least, would like to see the state go in this direction.

"In today's health care situation, we need all the options available to be possible," said Rep. Fulton **SHEEN** (R-Plainwell), who'd looked into HSAs last session. "Any time you present something new, people and groups don't understand how it works or know about the money-saving possibilities."

HSAs are a relatively new health care option where an employee is giving a certain amount of money by his or her employer to be spent as they wish on their health care. HSAs typically work best for younger employees, who tend to have fewer health issues and who can accumulate large sums in their savings accounts by the time they reach retirement.

The natural resistance to the idea comes from older employees, who don't have the time to accumulate as much money into a health savings account. At the same time, they don't want to see their younger colleagues going to HSAs because it takes the younger, healthier people out of the broader insurance pool. That tends to raise insurance costs for the older members.

State Employer David **FINK** said HSAs may have merit, but his office doesn't support them and doesn't see them as an improvement to what it's doing right now. Even if it did, HB 4705 is meaningless because the Civil Service Commission (CSC) can already negotiate HSAs through the collective bargaining process.

The bill's introduction is poorly timed because the state's recently-

negotiated three-year contract with employees started this month. It will be at least two years before the state employee health benefits discussion kicks back up again, Fink said.

As far as the proposal being "ill-advised," Fink told the House Insurance Committee this morning that the state currently offers a "terrific health care option." Employee labor groups haven't asked for HSAs so the issue has never been on the table.

If the Legislature wants to give its opinion about what type of health care coverage the state should give its employees, that's fine, Fink said. But lawmakers could be just as effective picking up the phone or mailing a letter than going through the costly political exercise of passing a meaningless bill.

"This legislation won't do anything," Fink said. "For 37 cents, you can let your opinion be known."

Sheen said it's important for the CSC to be aware of the cost-saving wonders of HSAs and then gave the following example. A friend recently pulled his groin playing in an over-30 hockey league and went to the doctor to make sure that he was accurate with his assessment. The doctor offered to put him through an MRI.

Realizing the doctor wanted to put him through the costly procedure for liability reasons more than anything, Sheen's friend said no and saved himself \$1,000.

Rep. Lisa **WOJNO** (D-Warren) tried shooting holes in the argument by saying that if HSAs were the silver bullet to the health care problem, more people would be using them. She also asked why folks should stop at health care with specialized savings accounts. Why not have specialized, tax-exempt savings accounts for food or gasoline?

HB 4705 moved out of committee 10-7 with all of the panel's Republican members voting for it and the panel's seven Democratic members voting against it.

Group seeks to keep families together

Friday, October 21, 2005

By Ted Roelofs
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- Their goal is simple: "Anything we can do to keep families together." To that end, Bishop Walter Durham and members of Families United for Justice and Equality met Thursday with Kent County social service officials. Their aim: to keep as many children as possible out of foster care.

The advocacy group is particularly concerned about the percentage of black children being removed from their homes for abuse or neglect and placed in foster care.

Black children in Kent County account for nearly 12 percent of the population but represent 40 percent of the children in foster care, according to state statistics.

"That's too high a percentage," Durham said.

Andy Zylstra, director of Kent County's Department of Human Services, said he is happy to work with advocacy groups such as Families United. He noted the county is beginning to implement the "Family to Family" initiative launched by Gov. Jennifer Granholm that seeks to keep as many children as possible within family networks instead of placing them in foster care.

"This is the kind of thing we are hoping to develop more with Family to Family," Zylstra said.

But Zylstra said the department cannot meet some of the demands of Durham's group, especially its call for a moratorium on removal of all children for neglect.

He indicated there simply are times when children ought to be removed from homes for neglect, where conditions reach the point the welfare of the child is threatened.

He noted that removals of children are approved by the court system and carried out by police, an effective check on the power of DHS over family welfare and foster care.

Although the goal is to keep as many families intact as possible, Zylstra said social workers must use caution when they make a decision to keep a child in a troubled home.

"The CPS (Children's Protective Services) worker, when they leave, have to be confident that child will not be harmed," Zylstra said.

He pledged to use Families United as an advocate to keep the department apprised of any cases where the rights of families have been compromised.

Families United also called for a voucher system that would allow families who need legal representation to hire any lawyer they choose.

Editorial

HEATING RELIEF: More time to pay, but little help from Congress

Detroit Free Press

October 21, 2005

Five days without air-conditioning in the middle of a sweltering summer can be unpleasant. Five days without heat in the depths of a Michigan winter can be downright lethal. So with heating bills expected to be 50% higher in the cold months to come, the state Public Service Commission proposed a sensible rule change this week, temporarily extending the time to pay utility bills from 17 days to 22.

That gives people whose finances may be staggered by natural gas charges an extra week to work something out with their utility to avoid a shutoff. That change and several others designed to ease the winter burden on consumers -- changes to which utilities are not opposed -- should be swiftly approved by the requisite state boards to go into effect by Nov. 1, ahead of the first round of higher bills.

Based on the nippy overnight temperatures in Michigan this week, those will begin arriving soon.

Other proposed rule changes will ban shutoffs or late fees based on estimated bills and shutoffs to the elderly or to households with incomes of less than 200% of the federal poverty level. That would be \$38,700 for a family of four.

These and other steps developed by the MPSC are important, but only stopgap, measures. It remains essential for low-income households with legitimate worries about staying warm this winter to contact their utilities to take advantage of payment plans or other assistance. And it is even more important for the federal government to fund home-heating aid programs at needed levels.

The U.S. Senate inexplicably this week refused again to put another \$3.1 billion in to the national Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Despite pleas from the nation's governors to make the program adequate now for sharply higher needs that are just ahead, the Senate is insisting the issue be left to a larger emergency spending bill that is not yet even on the congressional calendar.

Maybe the leaves aren't turning yet in Washington, but the change of seasons is cause for concern elsewhere in the country.

State unemployment dips

Web-posted Oct 20, 2005

By GARY GOSSELIN
Oakland Press Business Editor

Michigan's unemployment rate dropped to 6.4 percent in September - the lowest rate since November 2002.

Celebrations, however, might not yet be in order, warn Department of Labor and Growth officials, saying that although the rate is down substantially from the 7.1 percent last year, Michigan faces tough challenges.

"The state's jobless rate fell by six-tenths of a percentage point in the last two months," said Rick Waclawek, director of the department's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives. "However, we will need several more months of data to determine if this is a short-term occurrence or a longer-term trend, especially given some of the challenges taking place in the automotive sector."

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's office declared it a "great day," noting that the Senate also passed legislation to sell part of the state's tobacco settlement for \$1 billion for jobs initiatives. It's unclear when or if the House will take up the legislation.

"Gov. Granholm has made it clear she is going to go anywhere and do anything to fight for jobs and bring jobs to Michigan, and we as a state are going to do everything we can to bring jobs into the state," said spokeswoman Liz Boyd, noting it's too soon to say if this is a trend.

"We need more data to see if it's a short-term occurrence or a long-term trend."

Michigan's rate is still substantially higher than the national rate of 5.1 percent; Oakland County checks in with a 5.4 percent rate for August, with numbers expected Oct. 27; while the Southeast Michigan region dropped from 7.2 percent to 6.5 percent - the lowest rate since October 2002.

September rates were not available for other states around the country, but last month,

Mississippi's 6.8 percent rate was the only one worse than Michigan's 6.7 percent.

"To me, the one-two punch of the breakthrough of health care issues (with GM and the UAW) and this makes me feel better about the economy overall," said Dana Johnson, vice president and chief economist at Comerica Bank. "(Comerica has) a Michigan Business Index and it strengthened over the summer, and it's good to see it borne out in these numbers.

"We obviously have some difficult consolidation ahead of us in the auto sector and that's going to be a headwind in Michigan and there will be cutbacks in the auto industry and givebacks in compensation. There will be some backtracking, but it makes me less worried about a big swoon in the economy."

The manufacturing sector picked up 8,000 jobs, said Bruce Weaver, economist for the Department of Labor and Growth, noting most of those were the result of layoff callbacks from automakers. Trades was the big loser, declining by 8,000 jobs last month.

"Most (losses) were concentrated in food stores and building supply and retail, and (all) could have been impacted by gas prices," Weaver said. "If you take a longer-range perspective, the job growth has been in health care jobs and the leisure and hospitality sector and in job loss in two areas: manufacturing and retail."

Total employment for the state is at 4.8 million and there are 328,000 unemployed.

"That ain't bad," said Joe Ross, work force analyst with Communications & Research, an East Lansing research and marketing company. "In our humble forecasting, we've been predicting a gradual decrease in unemployment. Business executives have been reporting to us they feel as though their region is coming out of a slow-growth business environment. It's not rampant optimism, but for the first time in a number of years, executives from every corner of the state are showing more optimism for growth."

The decrease in retail jobs most certainly is tied to the recent "struggle" that sector has faced, said Tom Scott, spokesman for the Michigan Retailers Association. High inflation and gas prices have exacted a toll on retailers of late, but that drop in retail jobs is probably not a real indication of any huge downturn in that industry, he said.

"I really think that the scare of the auto shock has run its course," said Ross. "I think business people now are collectively coming to the realization that 'Yeah, it's going to be a harder economy to make a buck, but we have to face it.' We've seen some underlying strength in the last nine months, but now that they've come to that realization, they're ready to get in the game."

Training grants bound for northern Michigan

Cadillac News

October 21, 2005

LANSING - Job training dollars are on the way to northern Michigan to upgrade the skills of 1,027 employees and 77 new hires, Gov. Jennifer Granholm announced Thursday.

The money goes to 26 companies in Antrim, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Wexford counties and is being distributed through Northwestern Michigan College. The grant, provided by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation as part of the Manufacturing Competitiveness Program (MCP), will provide employees with training in advanced manufacturing and high-tech automotive applications.

The following local factories are receiving money:

€ AAR Mobility Systems will use \$109,000 to train 225 workers and 50 new hires.

€ American Tool & Die will use \$1,600 to train four workers.

€ Avon Automotive will use \$10,000 to train 25 workers.

€ B&P Manufacturing will use \$9,600 to train 20 workers.

€ Cadillac Fabrication will use \$4,800 to train 10 workers.

€ Hayes Lemmerz will use \$51,614 to train 100 workers and four new hires.

€ Michigan Rubber Products will use \$11,200 to train 23 workers.

€ Rexair will use \$26,800 to train 54 workers.

€ Saber Tool Company will use \$5,400 to train 16 workers.

Commissioners say contractors owe 'living wage' for county work

Critics say proposal would further damage economy

PUBLISHED: October 20, 2005

By Chad Selweski
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Macomb County would stop doing business with companies that pay their workers less than \$9.58 an hour, under a "living wage" proposal put forward by two Democratic county commissioners.

Commissioners Jon Switalski of Warren and Paul Gielegghem of Clinton Township are proposing mandatory wages for county contractors that would lift workers above the federal poverty level. For companies that don't offer health insurance benefits, the required wage would be set at 125 percent of the poverty line, or \$12.09 per hour.

"What this shows is that Macomb County is a place that is going to lead by example," said Gielegghem, a former state representative. "It says that wages are important. It shows that we're a place that's going to take care of its own."

Currently, Wayne and Washtenaw are the only counties in Michigan with a living wage requirement, though 16 cities, including Warren and Eastpointe, also have similar rules.

Switalski and Gielegghem anticipate passage of the proposal when the county board's Personnel Committee meets Monday, but the business community will offer opposition to the idea.

Grace Shore, president of the Central Macomb County Chamber of Commerce, said she was astounded that a living wage proposal would be offered at a time when Michigan's economy lags behind the rest of the nation and Macomb County's economy lags behind the rest of Michigan.

"In this economic environment, when the economy is struggling ... to impose a living wage at this point in time is absurd," Shore said. "The market should dictate what people are paid, not government."

Shore predicted some companies would stop bidding on county contracts and the price of bids would rise, costing taxpayers more money.

Living wage ordinances have been adopted in dozens of major U.S. cities in the past decade as officials acknowledged that the federal minimum wage leaves some full-time workers living in poverty.

David Reynolds, a professor at Wayne State University's Labor Studies Center, has studied living wage ordinances for several years and has

found that the business community's concerns about costs proved unwarranted. Reynolds has found that many major cities who have reviewed their policy have subsequently strengthened their living wage ordinances.

After interviewing municipal officials and contractors in about a dozen Michigan cities with living wages, Reynolds feels that he has debunked many of the criticisms.

"We found that there was little impact on the contracting process -- the number of bids they were getting or the price companies were charging," he said. "They did not see any shift in economic development. There was no evidence of job losses. There was no change in their ability to attract business investments."

Reynolds said his research shows that wages are only a small portion of many companies' overall costs, and low-wage workers represent a small fraction of most firms' work force. At the same time, living wage requirements can mean a raise of more than \$3,000 for a low-wage worker.

Switalski said his proposal requires the county to set an example by boosting the pay for 94 part-time county workers who now earn between \$6.75 and \$7.51 an hour. That would cost an estimated \$390,000 a year.

"We feel we can't require contractors to pay a certain wage if we don't pay all of our employees the same," said Switalski, a freshman commissioner. "We need to set priorities and ... one of those is to lift people out of poverty."

The proposed living wage policy would apply to all contractors and subcontractors who have agreements worth at least \$50,000 to provide services to the county. Exemptions are granted for temporary workers, small nonprofit agencies with fewer than 10 employees and nonprofits that can successfully claim that the wage rules would present a hardship. The impact will be felt greatest in the county Department of Community Mental Health Services, which relies on 124 contractors.

Last year, state legislation to ban local living wage ordinances was ushered through the Republican-controlled Legislature by business groups but was vetoed by Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm.

The debate over living wages has been waged across the nation as the 100-plus cities who have adopted such rules include Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, Miami, Baltimore and Detroit. Locally, in Eastpointe and Warren, officials have said that living wages have had no detrimental effect on their costs or ability to attract businesses.

The Macomb County proposal comes on the heels of a report presented to county officials on Monday by the United Way for Southeastern Michigan that identified increases in poverty in the county. The report asserted that the "basic needs" of a typical Macomb County family -- housing, food, clothing, transportation and health care -- requires a pay rate of \$19.27 an hour.

Battle Creek Enquirer

Friday, October 21, 2005

EDITORIAL

Living-wage proposal needs close scrutiny

Battle Creek city commissioners this week introduced an ordinance which, if approved, would require companies and organizations that do business with the city, or receive grants through it, to pay their employees a "living wage" - deemed to be \$10.19 an hour.

Supporters say it is only fair that the city support efforts to ensure that working people earn enough to be self-sufficient.

Opponents say it's not the city's responsibility to tell businesses in a free-market economy what they must pay their employees.

We say . . . slow down. This is an important issue that deserves a careful and wide-ranging community discussion about its ramifications. We're a bit chagrined to see it brought up just weeks before voters elect a new city commission. This should not be a political football, but rather a reasoned decision on what direction the city should take, and what the consequences would be of adopting or not adopting the ordinance.

How many businesses and organizations would be affected? What impact would the proposed ordinance have on future economic development? Might it cause fewer businesses to seek city contracts? If so, would the decrease in competitive bidding drive up costs for the city?

These are just some of the questions that need to be addressed before the city commission determines the proposal's fate.

As written, the ordinance would require any company or organization that receives, in any 12-month period, more than \$50,000 in contracts or \$10,000 in grants, including tax abatements and federal Community Development Block Grant funds, to pay employees at least \$10.19 an hour. It would not cover for-profit organizations with fewer than five employees or nonprofit groups with fewer than 10 employees, and further exemptions could be granted if the city commission deems that the ordinance would pose economic harm to a specific nonprofit group. But what criteria would be used to define "economic harm"?

At a time when Battle Creek is competing with the rest of the nation to retain and attract jobs, would a living-wage proposal enhance or detract from economic recruitment efforts?

For simplicity's sake, let's ignore the cost of benefits and say that a business owner determines that he or she can afford to spend \$100 an hour in wages. Is it better for that business to hire 12 people at \$8.33 an hour or lay off two people and employ 10 people at \$10 an hour? There is no "right" or "wrong" answer to the question - it is simply a decision that must be made. Chances are that the \$10-an-hour employees would view the living-wage proposal differently than the two workers who were laid off.

It's admirable to want to ensure that anyone who puts in a full day's work earns enough to put a roof over their family's head and food on the table, along with paying for insurance, utilities, etc. But if mandating a living wage results in fewer jobs, is it worth it?

Another issue to consider is how well equipped is the city to administer a living-wage program? How and by whom would it be enforced? City staff already is stretched too thin to try and enforce a number of ordinances, such as inspections of rental units. These questions and more need to be addressed before the city jumps feet-first into a program that could require more city resources and yield uncertain benefits. Now is the time for workers, businesses and organizations that would be affected by the proposed ordinance to step forward and state their case for or against its passage. Then city commissioners can decide in which direction the city should move.

Originally published October 21, 2005

Salvation Army gets ready for holidays

Friday, October 21, 2005

By Pat Rombyer

prombyer@citpat.com -- 768-4924

Signs of the approaching holidays are cropping up, especially at the Salvation Army where workers are organizing to make sure every child finds toys under the Christmas tree.

Low-income families and individuals can begin registering Oct. 31 for food and toys. Those families who wish, may be "adopted" out to churches, businesses or organizations that fill their Christmas dinner needs and provide Santa Claus toys for the children.

The other families are taken care of by the Salvation Army, which invites them in days before Christmas to select toys and pick up baskets of food.

The annual Toys for Tots drive provides the toys.

"This is for anyone who needs assistance with food, toys or both," said Virginia Fetterman, director of social services at the Salvation Army. "We don't go strictly by income, we serve working families too, those whose incomes don't cover the expense."

She's expecting 1,900 families to sign up.

"Last year we did 1,859 and things are so much worse this year. Gas alone is a killer, let alone the heating increases," Fetterman said.

Families need to provide Social Security numbers or a picture identification for each adult and birth certificates for children.

The agency keeps a master database of names so they can be cross-referenced by other helping organizations in town.

Organizations that want to "adopt" a family, an individual or a senior citizen may contact the Salvation Army. Last year, 450 families were adopted by local groups and individuals.

United Way campaign seeks heroes

Thursday, October 20, 2005 12:38 PM EDT

Lenawee County tries to raise \$1.6 million to benefit local causes.

By Renee Lapham Collins

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

ADRIAN - When was the last time you were a hero?

That's the question that Rick DeVries, chairman of this year's United Way campaign, is posing to the community at large.

DeVries uses examples from real life, such as Richard Picciotto, who rescued scores of people from the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, and Arland Williams, the man who saved three other people when Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the Potomac in January 1982, to encourage people to dig a little deeper this year on behalf of the 12 community organizations served by United Way.

"None of us will be asked to give our lives, but I hope that we are compelled in our hearts to give up a part of our lifestyle, whether it's a dinner out or a weekly cappuccino," said DeVries. "There are thousands this year in need of heroes in Lenawee County."

DeVries and Kathleen Schanz, executive director of United Way for the past year, have been making the rounds of civic organizations, church groups, and companies to tell the story of United Way and emphasize the need for continued support. In DeVries' eyes, it is a "Mission Possible." In recent years, he said, the United Way hasn't broken the \$1.6 million mark. This year, the goal is \$1,654,321, which represents a countdown to the possibility of breaking that mark.

"It is a countdown to the future," he said.

United Way funds Associated Charities, the HOPE Center, the American Red Cross, the Adrian Community Nursery, the Catherine Cobb Domestic Violence Shelter, Scouting, the Community Action Agency medical clinic, Catholic Charities, the YMCA, Goodwill, and Hospice. In a year, according to Schanz, one in three people in the county benefits from one of these agencies.

Fund-raising for United Way is a 365-days-a-year job, according to Schanz, but between September and November, the cause of United Way is "lifted up."

"It is a harvest season in more than one way," she said.

Natural disasters like the South Asia tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake in Pakistan have had a far-reaching impact on what people are able or willing to give, creating a “donor fatigue.”

“We clearly are impacted by disasters,” Schanz said.

The local Red Cross chapter, for example, raised thousands for Hurricane Katrina relief, all of which went directly to the American Red Cross.

In addition, volunteers were trained by the local chapter and sent to hurricane-stricken areas at the cost of the Red Cross, which receives 50 percent of its funding from United Way.

“The United Way has long-term needs which will continue to escalate in our community,” said Schanz.

DeVries and Schanz are hoping to frame their message of the importance of United Way so that people will understand the “big picture,” that needs will exist in Lenawee regardless of what is happening in the rest of the world.

“With the stories Rick has shared, I think we are getting people to talk about what that bigger picture is,” Schanz explained. “I continue to be hopeful and optimistic.”

DeVries said he believes they have been successful so far in getting the message out. He said he has talked with people in the community who have heard the message and responded in a positive way.

“We have a tendency to think of (the need) as something that happens to our neighbor, or to someone who lives across town, and not to ourselves,” he said. “But we are all subject to the vicissitudes of life. I hope that people will be supportive and recognize the issue with open hearts. None of us knows what comes tomorrow.”